



Newspaper cartoon depicting sports journalist and athletics coach Kevin O'Connor, after his attack in a Ugandan newspaper on tobacco sponsorship of sport.

began to take up the issue. Eventually, on the day at the USPA gala on 28 May, it was announced that Sportsman's sponsorship of the event was finishing, to be replaced by Nile Breweries. Another article by Kevin O'Connor, breaking the news of the change in sponsors, was prominently displayed in *The East African*, an influential newspaper read in several countries in the region. And befitting a member of the health coalition, O'Connor elegantly clarified health differences between the products of the old sponsor and the new.

The sustained campaign by the ministry and its supporting coalition against the unethical association of unhealthy smoking and healthy sport had got top newspaper journalists speaking out against the tobacco funded gala, later echoed by leading sports administrators. One lone newspaper crudely stuck to the BAT line to the bitter end, even claiming, between free coverage of one of BAT's most cynical promotions (see "Think and Win" story below), that the Sportsman gala "attracted all the country's leading sports personalities". In reality, out of the 16 national sports associations, only one sent its president or chairman to the event. In a pleasing piece of inter-ministerial solidarity, even the minister of sports skipped the event after consultations with the director general of medical services. And perhaps most telling of all, the two runners up for the annual Sportsman of the year award were also absent.

The Sportsman saga has important lessons for tobacco control advocates in developing countries, especially the role of the Tobacco or Health Forum. The members worked together to build up public opinion against the exploitation of sport by BAT, adding the skills and imprimaturs of other people and

organisations to the government's resources in a classic example of the sort of coalition that is so essential for standing up to the tobacco industry. As in other cases featured in recent editions of *Tobacco Control*, it shows that even in countries whose economic resources are less than the turnover of one of the transnational tobacco companies, where the companies used to do much as they pleased, people working together for health can win major battles.

## Kenya: BAT at it again—but it's changed

We have reported extensively in past issues on the disgraceful seminars held by BAT for journalists from developing countries, to "put the other side", give a "more balanced view", and generally assist them, industry style, with their journalistic work on the smoking "debate" or "controversy". Now it has done it again, despite protestations issued in countries where incriminating internal documents have been widely exposed, that it has changed its ways. Sure, BAT, like rival Philip Morris, has put together a website that appears to acknowledge the scientific evidence against active (though expressly not passive) smoking. However, a cursory glance by anyone with more than a passing interest will see what an incomplete, unsatisfactory collection of weasel words and agenda changing much of it is. However, as is evident from so many of the items in this journal, what seems to have changed is the strategy rather than overall behaviour.

So it was that in May, a group of east African journalists were flown to what a lucky recipient of BAT's largesse described as one of Kenya's most prestigious hotels, the luxurious Windsor Golf and Country Club. This time the seminar's faculty appears to have lacked the outside "experts" of the past, perhaps because some of the minor academic establishments or private foundations they tended to represent objected to the intellectual prostitution with which they were inevitably linked by greedy employees. So it was left to BAT staff to try to demonstrate first, that the company had changed, and second, that they were no longer accountable for past practices, even though present practices in marketing and public relations seem little or no different.

Certainly the approach is more subtle—out with obvious denials of the evidence on disease and addiction, in with a new array of weasel words and better techniques for clouding the issues. After a passing reference to established risk, BAT's Mr Keith Gratton put up a thick smokescreen of allegedly unresolved questions. For example, he exploited an old favourite, the fact that science still has to determine why the majority of smokers do not contract lung cancer. He then charged poor, abused science with having to divide the blame between smoking and the role played by factors such as family history, diet, and the environment. Even his acceptance of the risks of tobacco was densely hedged by unspecific reservations, and he could not resist leading on to another industry regular, the myth of free choice in starting to smoke. "We accept that in the most simple sense, smoking is a cause of certain serious diseases," he was reported to have told the journalists, but the risks were well known and "people still decide to smoke". So that's all right then.

Students of communications could write a doctorate on the role of this sort of language in pretending to address the fact that cigarettes are addictive and kill about half their users. But who needs such finesse when the effect of the seminar on a senior journalist can be so decisively pro-tobacco? Mr Kyazze Simwogerere, editor of Uganda's *Sunday Monitor*, was reported by another Ugandan newspaper as saying that, compared to AIDS, fast cars or cholesterol, "tobacco is just a soft option. It's hard to stand these moralistic, puritanical guys who are just gripping onto a cause for the sake of pushing a cause." BAT may have changed the detail, but in this dark

purpose, as with its promotional activities in east Africa, it hasn't changed a bit.

## Uganda: "Think and Win"—BAT hasn't changed

BAT has changed, its public relations people are strenuously trying to assure the world. But there is no discernible change in its marketing practices, as a crude promotion to hundreds of children during the Showtime Football event in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, amply demonstrated last April. Even ignoring the fact that sales of individual sticks is the sort of practice BAT can no longer get away with in the west—we can hear them protest that local customs are different around the world—the name itself is clearly a cynical parody of the International Quit and Win smoking cessation competition. In the absurdly inappropriately named "Think and Win" competition, anyone purchasing a mere five of BAT's Embassy cigarettes was given an entry form for a competition. The forms went into a prize draw lottery for a cornucopia of desirable prizes, including a luxury holiday for two to South Africa. By little coincidence, it seems, the draw took place at the end of May, just about the time of the Quit and Win draw and the World Health Organization's World No Tobacco Day.

Tackled later about the Think and Win Embassy promotion at the Showtime Football event, BAT's local head of corporate and regulatory affairs claimed that his team had operated just for a short time during the half



Scenes from the Embassy "Think and Win" promotion held during the Showtime Football event in the Ugandan capital, Kampala.

time break at the soccer match. It seemed to be a case of just allowing enough time for people to buy their five cigarettes and grab an entry form. Unfortunately for BAT, a member of the ministry of health's Tobacco or Health group happened to be present all afternoon and well into the evening, and pictures of hundreds of children enjoying disco dancing shows on a stage throughout the period were published later in a local newspaper. By the time some of these were shot, it was clearly dark, and as the ground did not have floodlights, the match must have long since finished.

The Showtime Football promotion was only one among many. There were travelling promotions in expensive four wheel drive vehicles, and three regional draws, each the occasion of much publicity, with people lining up to sample a free Embassy cigarette or buy their qualifying five cigarettes to enter the competition. As obsequiously reported by the newspaper *New Vision*, which does a passable imitation of a BAT house journal, "Wherever Embassy went all over the country, there was no stopping the people who kept flowing in." The actual promotions and the explanations that follow them may change, but clearly BAT has not.

## Papua New Guinea: black mark for Red Cross

Bad news from Papua New Guinea (PNG), where BAT has once again

sponsored the Red Cross Miss PNG Quest, as ironically (or cynically) reported on 31 May, World No Tobacco Day. The Quest was somewhat defensively described by its chairperson, Ms Sue Darby, as a fund raising effort to benefit the charity work of the Red Cross, in which she said judgement was based on the intelligence, talents, and efforts of the entrants, and "not a beauty contest, as some think". More to the point, BAT's PNG corporate affairs manager Mr Vai Reva said of the 7500 Kina (approximately US\$3000) sponsorship, its sixth annual donation: "We see that the Red Cross plays a very, very big role in the society, and we'd like to associate ourselves with the good work that the Red Cross is doing in the country." Quite so.

The inevitable quote from Ms Darby on behalf of the Red Cross expressing grateful appreciation included the mystifying statement that the sponsorship was "a positive gesture of support from the public". Perhaps BAT is so much in charge of things in PNG that Ms Darby's confusion of it with the public is understandable; or maybe the smell of the money distorted her reasoning abilities. Then again, she may simply lack some of those vital qualities required of entrants to the Miss PNG Quest. Whichever is the case, young women in PNG may in future be just that little bit less likely to appreciate the scale of the risk they run of contracting a serious disease if they become addicted to the sponsor's products.

## World: a tale of two centuries

Estimates of mortality from tobacco are mind boggling even at the local level—telling a politician that a hundred of his or her potential voters will go to an early grave this year just because they smoked can be a very effective way of making them take the issue seriously. But at national level, even modest estimates are so large it is not surprising that politicians and the public find it difficult to comprehend the true scale of avoidable disease and early deaths caused by tobacco use. Move on to the global scale and the World Health Organization estimates by Peto and Lopez (two to three million per annum now, reaching 10 million sometime in the 2020s) are so vast as to be like the cause—breath-taking.

Now Professor Sir Richard Peto of Oxford University, UK, has gone still higher. Reviewing global mortality in



Embassy "Think and Win" competition entry form.